AVATAR

The Last Airbender
Show #995

Part 1
Show #219
BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER NINETEEN: "The Guru"

Written by:
Mike DiMartino
&
Bryan Konietzko

Part 2
Show #220
BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER TWENTY: "The Crossroads of Destiny"
Written by:
Aaron Ehasz

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ACT ONE

EXT. UPPER RING - UNCLE AND ZUKO'S NEW APARTMENT - MORNING

Uncle and Zuko have settled into their fancy new apartment in the Upper Ring. Uncle stands in the spacious kitchen, preparing a hearty breakfast of jook (it looks like an unappetizing bowl of cream of wheat.) Zuko enters, rubbing his eyes.

ZUKO
(groggy)
What's that smell?

UNCLE
It's jook. I'm sure you wouldn't like it.

Zuko smells the pot of jook, like he's inhaling the fragrance of a beautiful flower.

ZUKO
(DEEP INHALE) Actually, it smells delicious. I'd love a bowl, Uncle.

Zuko happily holds up his bowl. Uncle stares at Zuko for a beat, taken off guard by Zuko's uncharacteristic enthusiasm.

Zuko continues to hold the bowl out. Uncle happily ladles some into it.

UNCLE
Now that your fever is gone, you seem different somehow.

ZUKO
It's a new day -- we've got a new apartment, new furniture, and today's the grand opening of your new tea shop. Things are looking up, Uncle.

Zuko happily slurps up his jook. Uncle smiles.

EXT. HILL OVERLOOKING CHAMELION BAY - MORNING

Appa, Aang, and Sokka land on a hill, overlooking a Water Tribe encampment below.

AANG
You haven't seen your dad in over two years, you must be so excited!

We reveal Sokka doesn't look so much excited as scared.

SOKKA
I know I should be but... I just feel sick to my stomach.

AANG
Don't be nervous. He's going to be so happy to see you.

SOKKA
So what about you, are you nervous to meet this Guru?

AANG
Not at all. I'm ready to master the Avatar state -- I'll do whatever it takes.

Sokka nods and jumps down off Appa.

AANG (cont'd)
See you in a week. Yip-yip!

Appa and Aang take off, leaving Sokka alone. He takes A DEEP BREATH, and heads down the hill.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WATER TRIBE CAMP - A LITTLE LATER

(NOTE: This should be a very emotionally powerful sequence. It will require excellent staging, acting, and music to sell it!) Sokka hesitantly walks into camp with a slumped posture and nervous expression -- he's not sure if he belongs with these men. As he walks past the other warriors, they all look surprised to see him. But after a beat, they all stand in respect and a couple men give him a manly tribal handshake.Sokka smiles, regaining some of his confidence. One of the warriors gestures toward a large tent at the end of camp, as if to say 'you're father's in there.' Sokka heads toward the tent.

INT. HAKODA'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Sokka pokes his head in and sees his dad engrossed in a battle map with Bato and two other warriors. Bato notices Sokka first and gives Hakoda a nudge and points toward Sokka. Hakoda looks up and his hard, warrior-like grimace melts into a warm, fatherly smile.

WARRIOR #2
Sokka, good to see you.

HAKODA
Sokka...

Sokka tries to hold back his tears.

SOKKA
Hi, Dad.

Sokka can't bear it anymore, he runs over and hugs his father for the first time in two years. Father and son continue their emotional reunion -- neither one letting go.

INT. BA SING SE PALACE - THRONE ROOM - MORNING

The Earth King sits on his throne, petting his bear who sits beside him. Azula, Mai, and Ty Lee (still disguised as Kyoshi warriors) stand before him.

EARTH KING
(to his bear)
Look Bosco! The Kyoshi warriors are here to protect us. Aren't you excited?

BOSCO
(PLEASED NOISE)

EARTH KING
(to the girls)
It's been a difficult week for me. My most trusted advisor, Long Feng, and his Dai Li agents tried to take control of Ba Sing Se from me.

AZULA
It's terrible when you can't trust the people who are closest to you.

EARTH KING
But there is good news -- as we speak, the Council of Five is meeting to plan an invasion of the Fire Nation this summer -- on the day of a solar eclipse!

Azula and the girls share a look.

AZULA
Really? Now that sounds like a fascinating and brilliant plan.

Azula flashes a little, evil smile. The king continues petting Bosco, oblivious to the danger he is in.

INT. BA SING SE - COUNCIL OF GENERALS WAR ROOM - DAY

Katara stands over a large war map on the floor (an Earth Kingdom version of the war map in 1.12.) Fire Nation tokens (representing armies) are spread out across the Earth Kingdom. Around Katara stand the COUNCIL OF GENERALS - a group of a dozen Earth Kingdom army leaders (including General Sung.) General How moves several Earth Kingdom tokens from Ba Sing Se to the west coast of the Earth Kingdom (where General Fong's base is located.) Momo curiously watches the tokens move.

GENERAL HOW
General Fong's base will serve as the launching point for the attack. In exactly two months, the Army and Navy will invade the Fire Nation on the Day of Black Sun.

Momo suddenly pounces on the map, knocking over all the Fire Nation tokens.

KATARA
Or we could send in Momo to do some damage! (LAUGHS, PETERS OUT) Sorry.

The Generals stare back at her, humorless. Katara picks up Momo. General How hands Katara some official-looking scrolls.

GENERAL HOW
All we need is the Earth King's seal in order to execute the plan.

KATARA
I'll get these scrolls to him right away. Thank you, General How.

Katara bows and exits.

EXT. ABOVE MOUNTAIN RANGE NEAR EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - SUNSET

Aang flies on Appa through the mist and the temple comes into view. He looks closer at the ruined and overgrown buildings and notices a tiny figure sitting in the open gardens. He is an ancient man sitting in a meditative pose, facing directly at the approaching party, as if he was expecting Aang at this moment.

EXT. GARDENS OF THE EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Appa lands on the grounds and Aang looks down at the figure. The guru remains motionless with his eyes closed, and he doesn't acknowledge their arrival. Aang tentatively approaches the seated figure.

AANG
Um... Hello? You're Guru Pathik (PRON: Pah-teek), right? The person who attached the note to Appa's horn?

GURU PATHIK
Indeed. I was a spiritual brother of your people, and a personal friend of Monk Gyatso.

AANG
In your note, you said you could teach me to gain control of the Avatar state. How?

GURU PATHIK
You must gain balance within yourself before you can bring balance to the world.
And the first step to gaining balance begins with this. Drink up!

The guru offers Aang a cup of thick liquid. Aang downs the contents of the cups, then suddenly spits it all out.

AANG
Blech! It tastes like onion-and-banana juice!

GURU PATHIK
That's because it is. Yum yum!

EXT. WOODS - SUNSET

Xin Fu and Master Yu lead an ostrich-horse drawn carriage through the woods (NOTE: they are far outside Ba Sing Se now.) Toph is in a metal box chained to the bed of the carriage. The box only has a tiny opening for air. As the cart comes to a fork in the trail, Xin Fu begins steering left.

MASTER YU
I believe we need to go right.

XIN FU
What are you talking about? The Beifong estate's this way.

MASTER YU
I'm quite certain you're mistaken.

They are interrupted by a BANGING on the metal box.

TOPH
Hey! Can you two old ladies quit your bickering for a second? I gotta go to the bathroom.

MASTER YU
Okay, but make it quick.

Master Yu takes out the key to the box but Xin Fu grabs it away from him.

XIN FU
What's wrong with you?

MASTER YU
(realizing)
Oh, very sneaky, Toph. Nice try, but you can't trick me.

Toph BANGS on the box again.

TOPH
Let me out of here so I can kick both your butts!

She rocks the box back and forth.

XIN FU
Quit your banging. You might think you're the greatest Earthbender in the world, but even you can't bend metal.

INT. PALACE - GUEST CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Azula (still in costume, but no makeup) stands behind Mai and Ty Lee, who are taking off their makeup in the mirror.

AZULA
We have been presented with an extraordinary opportunity, girls.

TY LEE
Mai finally gets to wear makeup that's not totally depressing?

MAI
Ha ha.

AZULA
I'm talking about conquering the whole Earth Kingdom.

Mai and Ty Lee look at each other.

56 AZULA (cont'd) 56
(explaining)
For a hundred years, the Fire Nation has hammered away at Ba Sing Se from the outside. But now we're on the inside... and we can take it by ourselves.

TY LEE
Gosh, you're so confident. I really admire that about you.

AZULA
From the inside, we're in perfect position to organize a coup and overthrow the Earth King. The key is the Dai Li.
(beat)
Whoever controls the Dai Li, controls Ba Sing Se.

EXT. EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - 3:45 AM

The camera pans down from the temple to the mountainside, through several cross-dissolving shots, until we reach the bottom of the valley.

EXT. BANKS OF A CREEK IN THE VALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The guru and a sleepy-eyed Aang stand at the edge of a creek that is clogged with debris. The water trickles through a few grimy pools. The guru uses it to illustrate his words.

GURU PATHIK
In order to master the Avatar state you must open all the chakras. Aang, tell me everything you know about chakras (PRON: CHUCK-ruhs).

AANG
What are chakras?

GURU PATHIK
I see. I guess we'll start with the basics.

He directs Aang's attention to the creek.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
The water flows through this creek, much like the energy flows through your body. As you see, there are several pools where they water swirls around before flowing on. These pools are like our chakras.

AANG
So, chakras are pools of spiraling energy in our bodies?

GURU PATHIK
Exactly.

The guru points at the creek with a long stick.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
If nothing else were around, this creek would flow pure and clear. However, life is messy and things tend to fall in the creek. And then what happens?

AANG
The creek can't flow?

GURU PATHIK
Yes. But if we open the paths between the pools...

The guru does just that with a stick, and we see the result as fresh water starts to clean out the filth from each pool.

AANG
The energy flows!

INT. DEEP INSIDE A CAVE UNDER THE MOUNTAIN - 4:00 AM

Aang is seated, meditatively, on the floor of the dark cave. The guru sits in the same position, across from Aang.

GURU PATHIK
There are seven chakras that go up the body. Each pool of energy has a purpose, and can be blocked by a specific kind of emotional muck.
(serious)
Be warned -- opening the chakras is an intense experience. And once you begin this process, you cannot stop until all seven are open. Are you ready?

AANG
I'll do whatever it takes.

GURU PATHIK
First we will open the Earth Chakra, located at the base of the spine. It deals with survival, and is blocked by fear.

Aang closes his eyes and holds his hands in the same meditative position as the guru. As the guru speaks, the camera slips into Aang's "head-space" and we see his memories and visions.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
(in a calming voice)
What are you most afraid of? Let your fears become clear to you...

We see RED COLORED visions of Aang's fears: some scenes from previous episodes, some new shots -- including bits of the Blue Spirit coming at him with swords, images from Aang's dream in 201, quick moments of Katara being buried by General Fong, etc. Suddenly, Aang hears a roar of flames. He opens his eyes and finds the Fire Lord standing where the guru was, silhouetted by a fiery blaze! Aang is terrified.

AANG
AAAAHHHHHH!!!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. DEEP INSIDE A CAVE UNDER THE MOUNTAIN - 4:00 AM

The cave is filled with fire as the Fire Lord stands menacingly above Aang, who shrinks away in terror.

AANG
AAAHHHHH!!!!

GURU PATHIK (V.O.)
(firm, but calm)
Aang, your vision is not real.

We cut back to reality and see that nothing has actually changed: The guru and Aang sit in the empty cave as before, but Aang's eyes are closed and he is shaking and sweating.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
You are concerned for your survival, but you must surrender those fears.

We see that Aang begins to calm down, though his eyes are still closed.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
(soothing)
Let your fears flow down the creek...

In a slow transition, we see Aang's vision of the Fire Lord melt into the play of light and shadow on the cave's surface. He opens his eyes to reality.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
(smiling)
You have opened your Earth Chakra.

EXT. SPACE BEHIND A BEAUTIFUL WATERFALL - 5:30 AM

Aang and the guru are surrounded by the pleasant thunder of a waterfall, as they sit side by side behind the sheet of falling water.

GURU PATHIK
(leading Aang)
Next is the...

AANG
(looking at the huge waterfall)
...Water Chakra?

GURU PATHIK
Brilliant! Maybe one day you will be a guru too. This chakra deals with pleasure, and is blocked by guilt.

Aang forms his hands in the same position as the guru and closes his eyes.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
(soothing)
Now, look at all the guilt which burdens you so. What do you blame yourself for?

In ORANGE COLORED visions, we see Aang running away from the Air Nomads, yelling at Toph when Appa was stolen, hiding the message from Katara and Sokka, Jet's demise. Finally, Aang sees all of the hurt and fear he inflicted on others when he was in the Avatar state.

AANG
(dreamily, but wracked with guilt)
I ran away. I hurt all of those people...

GURU PATHIK
Accept the reality that these things happened, but do not let them cloud and poison your energy. If you are to be a positive influence on the world, you need to forgive yourself.

Aang's face is still twisted in a pained expression, with his eyes closed -- then his expression changes to a peaceful one, as he forgives himself.

EXT. WATER TRIBE CAMP - MORNING

Hakoda and Sokka fill a Water Tribe tangle mine detonator cap with blasting jelly. Bato and several other warriors are with them.

HAKODA
This bay leads directly to the outskirts of Ba Sing Se. We've been using these tangle mines to stop the Fire Nation ships from getting through.

BATO
Your father invented tangle mines himself.

Sokka admires the large, spherical mine, which is made with a bamboo frame covered with dried animal skin.

SOKKA
Destructive, buoyant, and (DISGUSTED SOUND) terrible smelling.

HAKODA
Very perceptive. The mines are filled with skunkfish and seaweed. When a ship detonates the mine, the seaweed tangles up the propeller -- and the foul smell forces people to abandon the ship. I call it... the stink 'n' sink!

SOKKA
(HUGE LAUGH) Good one, Dad.

Bato stares at them with a humorless expression.

BATO
You're definitely your father's son.

They are interrupted by WARRIOR #1, who runs up to them.

WARRIOR #1
Hakoda, our scouts have spotted four Fire Nation ships.

HAKODA
(ordering)
Bato, get these mines loaded up.
(to the warriors)
The rest of you men, prepare for battle.

The warriors all rush off. Sokka stays put.

SOKKA
Uh, what should I do, Dad?

HAKODA
(sternly)
Aren't you listening? I just said the rest of you men get ready for battle.

Sokka smiles proudly and rushes off to join the other warriors.

EXT. UPPER RING - THE JASMINE DRAGON - MORNING

It's the grand opening. Uncle and Zuko stand outside, watching as eager customers enter the shop. They are wearing nice tea serving outfits.

UNCLE
Who thought when we came to this city as refugees, that I'd end up owning my own tea shop? Follow your passion, Zuko, and life will reward you.

ZUKO
Congratulations, Uncle.

UNCLE
I'm very thankful.

ZUKO
You deserve it. The Jasmine Dragon will be the best tea shop in the city.

UNCLE
No. I'm thankful because you decided to share this special day with me. It means more than you know.

Uncle pats Zuko on the back. Zuko turns and gives Uncle a big hug. Uncle looks shocked, but then hugs him back extra tight.

ZUKO
Now let's make these people some tea!

Zuko heads inside. Uncle is overcome with emotion.

UNCLE
(smiling proudly)
Yes. Let's make some tea.

Uncle follows Zuko inside.

EXT. CLIFF FACING A PART IN THE MOUNTAIN RANGE - 6:30 AM

The sun rises in a brilliant, beautiful display. Aang and the guru are bathed in the morning light, sitting next to each other and facing the sun.

GURU PATHIK
Third is the Fire Chakra, located in the stomach.

AANG
My Fire Chakra would like to eat something other than onion-banana juice.

GURU PATHIK
Good one! Moving on: This chakra deals with willpower and is blocked by shame.
(softer)
What are you ashamed of? What are your biggest disappointments in yourself?

Aang closes his eyes and the camera slips into his head-space over the guru's dialogue. We see YELLOW COLORED visions of Aang's embarrassment, like his difficulties Earthbending. Finally the visions lead to Aang burning Katara with his foolish foray into Firebending.

AANG
(dreamily, but firm)
I'm never going to Firebend again. I can't.

GURU PATHIK
You will never find balance if you deny this part of your life. You are the Avatar, and therefore, you are a Firebender.

Aang EXHALES deeply.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
Hmm... That chakra opened less like a flowing creek, and more like a... burping bison.

AANG
(BURPS) Tastes like onions and bananas. But strangely, something else... Pickles?

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY

Mai and Ty Lee (still disguised) stand guard at the entryway to the King's palace. Mai slumps against a column while Ty Lee does some stretches. Two Dai Li agents crawl down from the roof and cling to the wall, spying on them.

MAI
(SIGHS) I'm tired of wearing this girly disguise. I don't know how anyone can fight in this.

TY LEE
Maybe that's why it was so easy to beat the Kyoshi Warriors and take their clothes.

Ty Lee mimes her chi-blocking move to demonstrate.

MAI
How much longer do we have to serve the Earth King? If I have to clean up one more pile of bear poop, I'm gonna throw up.

TY LEE
Princess Azula promised we would go back to the Fire Nation as soon as we capture the Avatar. We just have to be patient.

MAI
Shush up. Do you want the whole palace to know we're Fire Nation?

TY LEE
(sotto)
Sorry.

The Dai Li agents look at each other and nod. They slink back up the wall onto the roof. A beat later, Azula emerges from the palace. She looks at Mai and Ty Lee sternly for a moment -- are they busted? Then she breaks into a smile.

AZULA
Good work, girls. I'm sure the Dai Li will deliver the message.

EXT. AIR TEMPLE GARDEN - 12:00 PM

The guru sits alone in the lush garden.

GURU PATHIK
The fourth chakra is located in the heart. It deals with love, and is blocked by grief.

Aang's chipper mood takes a downturn. He closes his eyes and meditates. The guru's voice leads him into visions of GREEN COLORED memories.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
Lay all your grief out in front of you.

We see brief memories of Aang at this temple when he was a little boy when he met Appa in the stables, from 216. We see he and Gyatso in a raging pie fight with the women Airbenders of the Eastern temple. An image of Gyatso laughing cross-dissolves to Gyatso's skeleton.

Aang opens his eyes and sees that he is seated on a vast cloud-scape. All of the Air Nomads he knew in his former life sit in front of him, solemnly meditating. He sees them fade away and he starts to cry silently. He is alone, but hears the guru's voice.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
You have indeed felt a great loss. But love is a form of energy, and it swirls all around us. The Air Nomads' love for you has not left this world - it is still inside of your heart, and it is reborn in the form of new love.

Aang's vision turns again to Katara, the first time he laid eyes on her when she found him in the iceberg.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
(very gently)
Let the pain flow away... Very good.

Aang opens his eyes. His cheeks are tear-stained, but he is smiling warmly.

AANG
Can I have some onion-banana juice, please?

INT. VAST CHAMBER IN THE AIR TEMPLE - 4:00 PM

Aang and the guru sit across from each other in the dark, echoing chamber (full of female Airbender statues).

GURU PATHIK
The fifth in the chain is the Sound Chakra, located in the throat. It deals with truth, and is blocked by lies -- the ones we tell ourselves.

Aang closes his eyes and tries to get into the meditation.

Over the guru's voice, we see light BLUE COLORED visions of Aang, Katara and Sokka on Appa's saddle in the end of 102. We hear an echo of Katara from that time:

KATARA (FROM 1.02)
Why didn't you tell us you were the Avatar?

In reality, we see the meditating Aang echo his response:

AANG
'Cause I never wanted to be.

GURU PATHIK
You cannot lie about your own nature. You must accept that you are the Avatar.

Aang relaxes in his meditation. We see visions of Katara give way to Aang alone on the mountaintop, looking down on the world (from the opening title sequence). For the first time we see the reverse view, and we see that Aang has an expression of calm content as he looks down on the world.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
Very good Aang, you have opened the Chakra of truth.

EXT. BALCONY OF A TOWER, FACING THE SUNSET - 6:30 PM

Aang and the guru sit facing the horizon as the sun sets and the golden fire of the sky gives way to the indigo glow of twilight.

GURU PATHIK
The sixth pool of energy is the Light Chakra, located in the center of the forehead. It deals with insight and is blocked by illusion.

Aang takes the correct hand position and closes his eyes.

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
The greatest illusion of this world is the illusion of separation.
(MORE)

GURU PATHIK (cont'd)
Things you think are separate and different are actually one and the same.

The guru's words are heard over the opening title sequence of the world map, in INDIGO COLORS. We see the four colors of the nations fade up, as we know them, defining their separations.

AANG
Like the four nations.

GURU PATHIK
Yes. We are all one people, but we live as if divided.

AANG
We're all connected. Everything is connected.

GURU PATHIK
That's right. Even the separation of the four elements is an illusion.

CROSS DISSOLVE TO:

INT. METAL BOX - CONTINUOUS

As we hear the Guru's voice continue, we see Toph feel the walls of metal surrounding her.

GURU (V.O.)
If you open your mind, you will see that all the elements are one -- four parts of the same whole. Even metal is just a part of earth, that has been purified and refined.

Toph places her hand on the back wall and concentrates, 'opening her mind.' **TOPH VISION:** she sees tiny particles of Earth embedded in the metal. Toph focuses her chi on the metal. Her hand trembles as she tries to bend the small particles of Earth in the metal. Nothing happens.

TOPH
(LONG, DEEP EXHALE) Come on, metal. Budge.

Toph tries again. Her hand trembles. After much effort and concentration the metal buckles! (NOTE: Metal should not split yet.) Toph shakes out her hand.

TOPH (cont'd)
Whoo! Toph, you rule.

Toph places her hand back on the metal and focuses her chi again...

EXT. UPPER RING - THE JASMINE DRAGON - SUNSET

Katara walks back to the palace with Momo. On her way, she sees the tea shop. She looks down at the scrolls that she's supposed to deliver to the King, then back at the tea shop.

KATARA
What do you say, Momo? A cup of tea before we get back to the King?

MOMO
(HAPPY CHITTERS)

She heads into the tea shop.

INT. THE JASMINE DRAGON - CONTINUOUS

The shop is crowded with happy patrons sipping tea. Katara walks up to the hostess. Momo is perched on her shoulder.

KATARA
Table for two, please.

ZUKO (O.S.)
Uncle, I need two jasmine, one green, and one lychee.

Katara's face freezes in horror. Could it be? She turns to see Uncle behind the tea counter placing cups of tea onto Zuko's serving platter.

UNCLE
I'm brewing as fast as I can!

VERTIGO SHOT on Katara in shock. She runs out to alert the King. (NOTE: Uncle and Zuko do not see Katara.)

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. TOP OF THE HIGHEST TOWER - 9:00 PM

Aang and the guru are perched at the zenith of the Air Temple, under a brilliant canopy of stars. It is like they are in a huge planetarium.

AANG
This is the last chakra, isn't it?

GURU PATHIK
Yes. Once you open this chakra, you'll be able to go in and out of the Avatar state at will. And when you are in the Avatar state, you will have complete control and awareness of all your actions.

Aang is psyched to attain this result.

AANG
Let's do this!

GURU PATHIK
The Thought Chakra is located at the crown of the head. It deals with pure cosmic energy, and is blocked by earthly attachment.

Aang closes his eyes.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
Meditate on what attaches you to this world.

Aang's VIOLET COLORED thoughts quickly turn once again to Katara. They are all pleasant scenes showing Aang's loving connection with her.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
Now, let all of those attachments go. Let them flow down the river, forgotten.

Aang snaps out of his meditation, incredulous.

AANG
What? Why would I let go of Katara? I... I love her.

GURU PATHIK
Learn to let her go, or you can not let the pure cosmic energy flow in from the universe.

AANG
(baffled, a bit angry)
Why would I choose "cosmic energy" over Katara? How could it be a bad thing that I feel an attachment to her? Three chakras ago that was a good thing!

GURU PATHIK
(intense)
You must learn to let go!

Aang is torn and confused.

INT. KING'S PALACE - NIGHT

Katara rushes into the palace in a panic. The king is not on his throne, but Azula, Mai, and Ty Lee are there (but are seated and lit in a way so that Katara can't see their faces yet.)

KATARA
(breathless)
Thank goodness you're here, Suki! Something terrible is going on. The Fire Nation has infiltrated the city -- I just saw Prince Zuko and his Uncle!

Azula and the girls exchange looks. This is big news.

KATARA (cont'd)
We have to tell the Earth King right away!

AZULA
Oh, don't worry -- I'll be sure to let him know.

Katara realizes something's not right. She draws some water out of her skin, but before she can strike, Ty Lee gets the jump on her and blocks her chi. Katara's water splashes to the floor. Momo SCREECHES and flies out of the palace. Azula steps out of the shadows and stands over the incapacitated Katara.

AZULA (cont'd)
So, Zu-Zu's in the city too. I think it's time for a family reunion.

Off Katara's look of horror...

EXT. TOP OF THE HIGHEST TOWER - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Aang sits there, baffled.

AANG
I'm sorry, but I can't let go of Katara.

GURU PATHIK
Aang, to master the Avatar state, you must open all the chakras. Surrender yourself.

AANG
(deep breath)
Okay, I'll try.

Aang closes his eyes and resumes his meditation. We slip into his head-space.

GURU PATHIK (V.O.)
Now think of your attachments, and let them go. Let the pure cosmic energy flow...

We see a VIOLET COLORED vision of Katara, but it falls back until it becomes a single star in the heavens. It is just Aang in the cosmos. Aang turns to face a several hundred-foot tall version of himself in the Avatar state, with eyes and tattoos glowing. He suddenly realizes his is on a knife-edge traverse over a celestial chasm. Aang begins to walk slowly towards the giant, glowing Avatar. In a surreal fashion he hears Katara's SCREAMS swelling from behind.

KATARA
No! Let me go!

Aang turns to see a vision of Katara who is in imminent danger -- chained up in a prison. Aang looks back and forth between the Avatar and Katara -- what will his choice be? Aang runs toward Katara but the bridge crumbles beneath him and he is sucked down into the chasm.

AANG
(SCREAMS)

Aang snaps out of his trance. He sees he is back on the roof with the guru. Aang leaps to his feet, desperate.

AANG (cont'd)
Katara is in danger! I have to go!

GURU PATHIK
No, Aang! By choosing attachment, you have locked the chakra! If you leave now, you won't be able to go into the Avatar state at all!

Aang stands for a beat with his back turned to the guru. Without responding, he leaps down the side of the temple, and the guru is left alone with a grave expression. A few moments later, Aang races through the skies on Appa, and the temple fades in the distance.

INT. METAL BOX - CONTINUOUS

Toph continues 'metalbending.' The metal wall is now split open slightly. Toph performs one last move, ripping the metal completely open.

EXT. COUNTRY PATH - CONTINUOUS

The noise of the metal ripping startles Xin Fu and Master Yu. They stop the carriage and go to the back of the cart to investigate. They see the back of the metal box ripped open. Toph is gone.

MASTER YU
It's another one of her tricks!

XIN FU
("You idiot!")
There's a giant hole in the box -- how is that a trick?!

TOPH
It's not. It's the real deal.

Toph sneaks up behind them and delivers a couple Earthbending attacks to smack the guys around. Then she knocks them both into the box. She metalbends the hole in the box closed, trapping Xin Fu and Master Yu inside.

TOPH (cont'd)
I <u>am</u> the greatest Earthbender in the world. Don't you two dunderheads ever forget it.

And with that, Toph bends an Earthwave and rides it back toward Ba Sing Se.

XIN FU
I'm going to be stuck in here forever with you, aren't I?

Beat.

MASTER YU
I have to go to the bathroom.

EXT. WATER TRIBE CAMP - NIGHT

Sokka (with wolf paint make-up) straps on his machete and picks up a war club. Hakoda walks up to him.

HAKODA
Ready to go knock some Fire Nation heads?

SOKKA
You don't know how much this means to me, Dad. I'll make you proud. And I'll finally prove to you what a great warrior I am.

Hakoda places his hand on Sokka's shoulder.

HAKODA
Sokka, you don't have to prove anything to me. I'm already proud of you, and I've always known you're a great warrior.

SOKKA
Really?

HAKODA
Why do you think I trusted you to look after our tribe when I left?

Sokka smiles and father and son head off to the ships together. Just then, Appa flies into camp. The look on Aang's face says it all.

SOKKA
This can't be good news.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - APPA'S BACK - LATER

Aang and Sokka are flying to Ba Sing Se. Sokka looks back at the Water Tribe ships which are heading off to the battle. Hakoda watches him go with pride and love in his eyes.

INT. PALACE - PRISON - NIGHT

Azula (still in costume) walks down the hall, escorted by the Dai Li. They lead her to Long Feng's cell, then exit. Throughout this scene, Azula acts like Long Feng has caught her, but she is actually playing him.

AZULA
What is this about? Your agents show up in the middle of the night and drag me down here? You will not treat a Kyoshi warrior this way.

LONG FENG
But you're not a Kyoshi warrior, are you?... Princess Azula of the Fire Nation.

A beat. Azula's eyes flare wide - a very convincing display that she is caught.

AZULA
What do you want?

LONG FENG
I want to make a deal. It's time that I regain control of Ba Sing Se. And you have something I need...

AZULA
Oh?

LONG FENG
The Earth King's trust.

AZULA
Why should I help you?

LONG FENG
Because I can get you the Avatar.

AZULA
I'm listening.

Long Feng smiles, thinking he's caught her in an ingenious trap.

EXT. UPPER RING - THE JASMINE DRAGON - NIGHT

Uncle and Zuko are sweeping up when a messenger enters. He bows as he hands Uncle a scroll.

MESSENGER
A message from the royal palace.

Uncle takes the scroll and reads it.

UNCLE
I... I can't believe it.

ZUKO
What is it, Uncle?

UNCLE
Great news! We've been invited to serve tea... to the Earth King!

Off Uncle and Zuko's excited reactions...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PALACE - PRISON - THE SAME TIME

Azula walks down the hall, leaving Long Feng behind. She smiles intently. Her plan is falling into place.

FADE TO WHITE.

TO BE CONTINUED...

END OF ACT 3

ACT FOUR

EXT. SKY - APPA'S BACK - DAY

As Aang and Sokka fly back toward Ba Sing Se, it's clear that Aang is really shaken up. Sokka is concerned.

SOKKA
So... what kind of trouble is Katara in?

AANG
I don't know. In my vision, I just knew she needed help.

SOKKA
It would be nice if your Avatar powers could be just a little more specific from time to time.

In the distance, they see an unusual trailing cloud of dust rising up from the ground.

SOKKA (cont'd)
What is that?

As they get closer they can see it's Toph, surfing a wave of Earth! They descend, and fly beside her.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Need a ride?

INT. PALACE - DAY

Azula addresses a large group of Dai Li agents. Mai and Ty Lee are nearby, still in their Kyoshi disguises.

AZULA
The Earth King and the Council of Five do not trust the Dai Li. They imprisoned your leader, Long Feng. Soon they will turn on all of you -- and eliminate you. Seizing power today is a matter of life and death.

Azula begins to pace the line of agents as she continues.

AZULA (cont'd)
This coup must be swift and decisive. The Earth King and each of the five generals must be taken out simultaneously.

Now she slows down, and looks each of the agents in the eye as she passes -- searching for any sign of disloyalty.

AZULA (cont'd)
Long Feng has placed you in my command while we overthrow the government.

She stops and cooly stares down one agent.

AZULA (cont'd)
If I sense any disloyalty -- any hesitation -- any weakness at all -- I will snuff it out.

The agent BOWS DOWN to Azula.

AZULA (cont'd)
That is all.

The Dai Li agents leave, as Azula confides in Ty Lee and Mai.

TY LEE
Nice speech, Azula! It was pretty and poetic but also scary in a good way.

MAI
Yeah I thought you were going to make that one guy pee his pants.

AZULA
There are still a few loose ends -- The Avatar... and my brother and uncle.

EXT. PALACE WALL - THAT MOMENT

Zuko and Uncle stand before the entrance to the Earth King's palace.

UNCLE
Many times I imagined myself here, at the threshold of the palace. But I always thought I would be here as a conqueror -- instead, we are the Earth King's personal guests, here to serve him tea.

Uncle smiles.

UNCLE (cont'd)
Destiny is a funny thing.

ZUKO
It sure is, Uncle.

Zuko puts his arm around his Uncle's shoulder, proudly. At that moment, a ROYAL GUARD greets them, and leads them through the massive archway.

EXT. SKY - APPA'S BACK - LATER

The kids catch up while they ride on Appa.

TOPH
So how did it go with the Guru?
Did you master the Avatar state?

AANG
Uh...

Aang hears the echo in his mind...

GURU (V.O. -- FROM 2.19)
If you leave now, you won't be able to go into the Avatar state at all!

Sokka sees he is distracted.

SOKKA
Aang, are you okay?

AANG
I'm great. It went great with the Guru -- I completely mastered the Avatar state. (AWKWARD CHUCKLE) Yeah...

INT. PALACE TEA ROOM - DAY

Zuko helps Uncle set up for a royal tea ceremony. Two royal guards stand nearby.

ZUKO
(sotto)
What's taking so long?

UNCLE
(sotto)
Maybe the Earth King overslept?

A number of Dai Li agents begin entering.

ZUKO
Something's not right...

The guards take up positions, surrounding Zuko and Uncle.

AZULA (O.S.)
It's tea time.

They see Azula enter now -- it's a trap!

ZUKO
Azula!

Zuko steps toward her, but is immediately faced down by a Dai Li agent.

AZULA
Have you met the Dai Li? They're Earthbenders, but they have a killer instinct that's so "Firebender", I just love it.

UNCLE
Did I ever tell you how I got the nickname "The Dragon of the West"?

AZULA
I'm not interested in a lengthy anecdote, Uncle...

UNCLE
It's more of a demonstration, really.

Uncle Iroh calmly takes a sip of tea -- then SPITS FIRE all around him in a circle, scattering the Dai Li so he and Zuko can make a break for it.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Uncle and Zuko run breathlessly through the palace, pursued by Azula and her Dai Li henchmen. The Dai Li launch Earthbending attacks at their fleeing prey, while Uncle and Zuko occasionally send a Firebending attack or try to create an obstacle to slow down their pursuers.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - DEAD END - CONTINUOUS

They come to a dead end. Uncle gathers the energy for a lightning attack, and BLASTS a hole through the palace wall. Looking outside, they see they are several stories up... but Azula and the Dai Li are close behind. Uncle leaps out of the hole in the wall.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

UNCLE
Ahhhhh!

Uncle lands with a crash on a topiary of a platypus bear. He looks back up to see Zuko hasn't jumped yet.

UNCLE (cont'd)
Come on! You'll be fine!

ZUKO
No. I'm tired of running.

ZUKO (cont'd)
It's time I faced Azula.

Zuko disappears from the opening in the wall and heads back into the hallway.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - DEAD END - CONTINUOUS

Azula and the Dai Li have caught up with Zuko.

AZULA
You're so dramatic. What, are you going to challenge me to an Agni Kai?

ZUKO
Yes. I challenge you.

AZULA
(shrugs)
No thanks.

Azula stands there calmly. Zuko furiously launches a Firebending attack at her -- Azula doesn't even flinch, as two Dai Li agents immediately leap to her defense, deflecting Zuko's attack with Earthbending. She shakes her head and turns her back on him as he is quickly outnumbered and overwhelmed by multiple Dai Li agents.

EXT. SKY - ABOVE THE PALACE - THAT MOMENT

Aang, Sokka, and Toph approach the palace, and land in a central courtyard. The kids jump off of Appa and head for the Earth King's main palace.

INT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Earth King sits at his throne, Bosco nearby.

EARTH KING
Katara's fine -- you have nothing to worry about.

AANG
But -- in my vision, I felt so sure that she was in trouble.

EARTH KING
Well, she met with the Council of Generals to plan the invasion. And since then, she's been off with your friends the Kyoshi warriors.

SOKKA
See, Aang? She's with Suki. They're probably back at our apartment right now, talking about makeup or something.

Aang relents, and nods.

AANG
Okay. Maybe you're right.

EARTH KING
Believe me, if there was any danger at all, Bosco's animal instincts would sense it.

They all look to Bosco, who BLINKS naively for a beat or two.

INT. CRYSTAL CATACOMBS - PRISON CHAMBER - THAT MOMENT

In an underground chamber made entirely of crystal, Katara is being held prisoner. Katara feels around the walls for an exit, but Earthbending is the only way in or out of here. Then, on the opposite side of the chamber, some of the crystals shift and move as an opening forms. A Dai Li agent enters.

DAI LI AGENT
You've got company...

A moment later, another agent enters leading in the new prisoner -- Zuko. Katara is shocked.

KATARA
Zuko!

He just stares back at her intensely, as the Dai Li agents leave, and close them in together.

INT. KIDS' APARTMENT - LATER

Toph, Sokka and Aang enter, closing the door behind them -- Momo flies to Aang.

AANG
Momo!

MOMO
(CRAZED CHITTERS)

Sokka looks around -- no one's home. Toph senses...

TOPH
There's no one else here.

AANG
Katara is in trouble, I knew it!

SOKKA
Oh no...

TOPH
Wait -- someone's at the door...

Just then, there's a KNOCK.

TOPH (cont'd)
Actually, I know who it is -- it's an old friend of mine. Glad to see you're okay!

Toph opens the door to reveal Uncle standing there. Sokka and Aang are stunned.

UNCLE
I need your help.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. KIDS' APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Uncle stands in the doorway.

AANG
You guys know each other?

TOPH
I met him in the woods once, and knocked him down. Then he gave me tea, and some very good advice.

UNCLE
May I come in?

Uncle enters and begins explaining.

UNCLE (cont'd)
Princess Azula is here in Ba Sing Se--

AANG
She must have Katara!

UNCLE
She has captured my nephew as well.

AANG
Then we'll work together to fight Azula, and save Katara and Zuko.

SOKKA
Whoa there -- you lost me at "Zuko".

UNCLE
I know how you must feel about my nephew. But believe me when I tell you there is good inside him.

SOKKA
Good inside him isn't enough -- why don't you come back when it's outside him too, okay?

AANG
Katara's in trouble -- all of Ba Sing Se's in trouble. Working together is our best chance.

Sokka knows he's right. He nods his approval.

UNCLE
I brought someone along who might be able to help us.

He leads them out to the porch.

EXT. KIDS' APARTMENT - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

A CAPTURED AGENT from the Dai Li is tied head to toe, his mouth covered. Uncle, Aang, Toph, and Sokka (and Momo!) each strike a menacing pose to show they mean business. (E.g., Uncle holds a small fireball in his hand, or Toph crushes a rock to dust, etc.) Uncle removes the agent's gag.

CAPTURED AGENT
Azula and Long Feng are plotting a coup -- they're going to overthrow the Earth King.

SOKKA
My sister -- where are they keeping Katara?

CAPTURED AGENT
In the crystal catacombs of Old Ba Sing Se -- deep beneath the palace!

INT. PRISON - THAT MOMENT

Long Feng is still being held prisoner. A Dai Li agent goes to speak with him, covertly.

DAI LI AGENT
The movements of all the generals and the Earth King have been plotted out step by step.

LONG FENG
Good. And the Fire Nation princess is cooperating?

DAI LI AGENT
Oh yes! More than cooperating... she's really taken charge. She's terrifying and inspirational at the same time. It's hard to explain.

Long Feng looks concerned.

INT. CRYSTAL CATACOMBS - PRISON CHAMBER

Zuko sits by himself in a corner, brooding. Katara paces a bit more energetically. Zuko doesn't speak.

KATARA
Why did they throw you in here? Oh wait, let me guess -- it's a trap. So that when Aang shows up to help me, you can finally have him in your little Fire Nation clutches.

Zuko looks up at her, then looks away wordlessly.

KATARA (cont'd)
You're a terrible person, you know that? Always following us, hunting the Avatar --trying to capture the world's last hope for peace!

No answer.

KATARA (cont'd)
But what do you care? You're the Fire Lord's son. Spreading war and violence and hatred is in your blood.

Zuko shakes his head dismissively.

ZUKO
You don't know what you're talking about.

KATARA
I don't?! How dare you -- you have no idea what this war has put me through -- me personally.

Katara sits down herself, and begins to look sad -- she holds her necklace, and tears well up in her eyes.

KATARA (cont'd)
The Fire Nation took my mother away from me.

A beat -- it's hard to tell what Zuko's reaction is. Then...

ZUKO
I'm sorry...

Now tears stream down her face, and Katara starts SOBBING.

ZUKO (cont'd)
That's something we have in common.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - LATER

Appa lands in a courtyard. Toph immediately jumps down and taps the ground, doing a "sonar" type move.

TOPH
Well, what do you know -- there is an ancient city down there, but it's deep.

Toph does a move creating a DEEP TUNNEL into the Earth.

SOKKA
We should split up. Aang, you go with Iroh to look for Katara and the angry jerk, no offense...

UNCLE
None taken.

SOKKA
... And I'll go with Toph to warn the Earth King about Azula's coup.

They split up -- Momo goes with Sokka and Toph.

INT. DARK TUNNEL - DAY

Uncle and Aang make their way deep underground. Uncle provides a light source with his Firebending, while Aang intermittently uses Earthbending to extend the tunnel.

AANG
So... Toph thinks you give pretty good advice. And great tea.

UNCLE
The key to both is proper aging. What's on your mind?

AANG
Well... I met with this guru who was supposed to help me master the Avatar state and control this great power... But to do it, I had to let go of someone I love. And I just couldn't.

UNCLE
Perfection and power are over-rated -- I think you were very wise to choose happiness and love.

AANG
But what happens if we can't save everyone and beat Azula? Without the Avatar state, what if I'm not powerful enough?

UNCLE
I don't know the answer. Sometimes life is like this dark tunnel. You can't always see the light at the end of the tunnel, but if you just keep moving...

BREAKTHROUGH! At that moment Aang's Earthbending opens the tunnel into...

INT. CRYSTAL COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

UNCLE
...You will come to a better place.

Uncle and Aang emerge into a great, vast and beautiful courtyard. It's a grand crystal plaza dating back to the ancient Old Ba Sing Se. The space is huge, with an underground stream running through it, being fed from above by a waterfall that cascades over many beautiful multi-colored crystals.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - LATER

Sokka and Toph spot General How in the distance.

SOKKA
There's General How!

Just then, they see Dai Li Agents surround him. The kids duck out of sight and watch what happens.

GENERAL HOW
What's going on here?

ARRESTING AGENT
You're under house arrest.

An agent PINS him to the wall, while another agent quickly MANACLES him -- they seal the deal with METAL SHACKLES.

SOKKA
The coup is happening right now -- we've got to warn the Earth King!

EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - MONTAGE

We see each of the remaining four generals as they are apprehended and put under house arrest:

One general rises up on a small Earthbending elevator, only to be ambushed on his arrival by Dai Li Agents.

Another general approaches the Earthbender version of a rotating door -- he enters, but it STOPS with him inside it. It starts moving again, but when he comes out he is already manacled, and is immediately arrested and shackled.

A general comes down the outside stairs of a stately palace. Suddenly the stairs turn to a slope, and he slides down to the Dai Li agents waiting at the bottom to apprehend him.

Finally, a general in a state of disrobe lies face down as he receives a massage. Two imposing Dai Li agents step into the frame. When the general looks up to see what's going on, a stone manacle-fist immediately strikes and/or grabs him.

INT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sokka and Toph come running into the Earth King's throne room. He's on his throne, with Ty Lee and Mai next to him in Kyoshi warrior outfits. Sokka doesn't recognize them.

SOKKA
Thank goodness we're in time!

EARTH KING
In time for what?

TY LEE
Yeah, what are you in time for...

Ty Lee approaches Sokka, flirtatiously -- she gets right up to his face, and twirls his "wolf tail" in her fingertips.

TY LEE (cont'd)
...Cutie?

MOMO
(realizing)
(HISSING SOUNDS)

SOKKA
Uh... I'm kind of involved with Suki.

TY LEE
Who?

WHAM! Toph knocks Ty Lee away from Sokka.

TOPH
They're not the real Kyoshi warriors!

MAI
Sorry to disappoint you...

Mai launches some throwing weapons at Toph. Immediately Toph bends a slab of stone up, deflecting the weapons which ricochet off. Sokka turns to see Ty Lee who has tumbled back up next to him. Ty Lee attempts a few different chi-blocking strikes. But knowing the danger, Sokka ducks and weaves a few times, avoiding the attacks.

TY LEE
It's like we're dancing together.

Meanwhile, Toph has put Mai on the defensive, driving her back and throwing her off balance with a series of attacks. Sokka and Toph are holding their own, when...

BOSCO (O.S.)
(SCARED MOAN)

They turn to see: The Earth King, STIFF with fear -- near his head we see FAMILIAR FINGERNAILS, poised for a Firebending strike. We widen to reveal Azula.

AZULA
This fight... is over.

Seeing the Earth King in danger, the kids have no choice but to surrender. They drop their guard. Ty Lee does a cartwheel pass, blocking each of their chi as she goes. Azula releases the Earth King from her grip.

AZULA (cont'd)
Get them all out of my sight.

Mai and Ty Lee (assisted by a two Dai Li agents) escort Sokka, Toph, the Earth King and Bosco out of the room...

BOSCO
(SAD MOAN)

Azula is now completely alone in the throne room. She looks around her -- and smiles. Moments later, Long Feng enters followed by eight Dai Li agents. Long Feng walks up to Azula, while the Dai Li agents encircle them both.

LONG FENG
Now comes the part where I double-cross you. Dai Li, arrest the Fire Nation princess!

None of the Dai Li move.

LONG FENG (cont'd)
I said -- arrest her.

They stay frozen -- they are not sure what to do.

LONG FENG (cont'd)
What's wrong with you?!

AZULA
It's because they haven't made up their minds -- they're waiting to see how this is going to end.

LONG FENG
What are you talking about?

AZULA
I can see your whole history in your eyes. You were born with nothing -- so you've had to struggle and connive and claw your way to power. But true power -- the divine right to rule -- is something you're born with.

Azula indicates the empty throne.

AZULA (cont'd)
(re: the Dai Li)
The fact is, they don't know which one of us is going to be sitting in that throne... and which one is going to be bowing down. But I know. And you know.

Now Azula makes her move. Dai Li agents get out of her way as she cooly strolls over to the throne and sits down. She's so comfortable in that position.

AZULA (cont'd)
Well?

It's like a staring contest -- and Long Feng BLINKS. He's broken -- he BOWS to Azula.

LONG FENG
You've beaten me at my own game.

AZULA
Don't flatter yourself -- you were never even a player.

She nods to the agents, and they close in and arrest him.

INT. CRYSTAL CATACOMBS - PRISON CHAMBER

Katara and Zuko have warmed up to each other slightly.

KATARA
I'm sorry I yelled at you before.

ZUKO
It doesn't matter.

KATARA
It's just that for so long now, whenever I would imagine the face of the enemy -- it was your face.

ZUKO
My face -- I see.

He touches his scar self-consciously.

KATARA
No, no, that's not what I meant--

ZUKO
It's okay. I used to think this scar marked me. The mark of the banished prince, cursed to chase the Avatar forever. But lately... I've realized I'm free to determine my own destiny.

He looks down.

ZUKO (cont'd)
Even if I'll never be free of my mark.

Katara thinks for a second.

KATARA
Maybe you could be free of it.

ZUKO
What?

KATARA
I have healing abilities.

ZUKO
It's a scar -- it can't be healed.

Katara reveals the special vial that Pakku gave her.

KATARA
This is water from the spirit oasis at the North pole -- it has special properties, so I've been saving it for something important. I don't know if it would work, but...

Zuko closes his eyes. Katara gently touches his scar with her hand. At that moment, they are interrupted as an OPENING is Earthbent in the crystal wall. Uncle and Aang enter.

KATARA (cont'd)
Aang!

She runs over to Aang and hugs him, overjoyed.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. CRYSTAL CATACOMBS - PRISON CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

KATARA
Aang, I knew you would come.

While Katara and Aang still hug, Zuko turns to Uncle.

ZUKO
Uncle, I don't understand. What are you doing with the Avatar?!

AANG
Saving you, that's what.

Zuko gets up and moves toward Aang, but Uncle holds him back-- Zuko and Aang hold each other's stares.

UNCLE
Prince Zuko, it's time we talked.
(to Aang)
Go help your other friends... We'll catch up with you.

Aang bows -- and then exits. Katara looks at Zuko for just a lingering instant before she follows Aang. Now Uncle and Zuko are alone.

ZUKO
(soft)
Why, Uncle?

UNCLE
You are not the man you used to be, Zuko. You are stronger and wiser and freer than you have ever been. And now you have come to the crossroads of your destiny. It's time for you to choose...

Zuko knows he's right--

UNCLE (cont'd)
It's time for you to choose GOOD!

At that moment, crystal spikes JUT UP from the floors and walls, imprisoning Uncle in a puzzle-like CRYSTAL CAGE! An opening forms on the opposite wall, as two Dai Li agents enter, followed by Azula.

AZULA
I expected this kind of treachery from Uncle, but Zuko -- Prince Zuko -- you're a lot of things, but you're not a traitor. Are you?

ZUKO
Release him immediately!

Zuko raises an arm to send a Firebending attack, but the Dai Li agent Earthbends crystals to PIN Zuko's arm.

AZULA
It's not too late for you, Zuko. You can still redeem yourself.

UNCLE
The kind of redemption she offers is not for you.

AZULA
Why don't you let him decide, Uncle? I need you Zuko. I've plotted every move of this day -- this glorious day in Fire Nation history -- and the only way we win is together. At the end of this day you will have your honor back -- you will have father's love -- you will have everything you want.

UNCLE
Zuko, I'm begging you. Look into your heart and see what it is that you truly want...

Azula nods to the Dai Li agent to release Zuko.

AZULA
You are free to choose.

She turns her back, and exits the chamber.

INT. CRYSTAL COURTYARD - LATER

Katara and Aang emerge into the courtyard.

KATARA
We've gotta find Sokka and Toph!

Just then, BLUE LIGHTNING crackles through the courtyard, lighting up the facets of all the beautiful crystals, as Azula enters behind them.

Katara reacts quickly, drawing water from the stream (or waterfall) and sending a sheet of ice beneath Azula's feet. Azula leaps up to a crystal ledge, releasing another attack at Katara and Aang. Aang Earthbends the ledge back into the wall, causing Azula to fall, but she reacts quickly, grabbing another crystal protrusion as she falls, and gymnastically vaulting herself to safety.

Perhaps we see another exchange or two between the threesome. (If we do, the feeling should be (if anything) that Azula vs. Katara and Aang is a close and balanced match -- that way, when Zuko shows up, his choice will tip the balance.)

As the three get tangled in some close hand-to hand melee, suddenly a RED fireball blasts near them -- it's unclear for whom it was intended. They all look up to see Zuko, standing at the entrance to the Crystal Courtyard. For a beat they all wonder -- we all wonder -- which side has he chosen?

Then Zuko makes his choice clear, as his face becomes angry again and he unleashes a furious barrage of fire that is clearly intended for Aang. Azula smiles.

INT. PRISON - THAT MOMENT

This is the same "Earthbender proof" prison that Long Feng was being held in. Now Sokka, Toph and Momo are here, with the Earth King.

TOPH
(sotto)
See any Dai Li agents nearby?

SOKKA
(sotto)
Nope -- all clear.

Toph does some act of metal bending that frees them.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Let's go!

EARTH KING
I'm not leaving without Bosco!

They rush out of the cell together.

INT. CRYSTAL CATACOMBS - THAT MOMENT

The four way fight we have all been waiting for, in all its entertaining combinations. Aang & Katara vs. Zuko & Azula. Awesome crystal-crazy location. Blue and red fire reflecting in the various crystal surfaces, etc.

Katara using the stream and waterfall for some Waterbending action. Aang using Airbending, Waterbending, and even a little Crystalbending when it comes in handy.

During an early exchange between Zuko and Katara:

KATARA
I thought you had changed.

ZUKO
I have changed--

He still sends an attack at her.

(This is a lengthier awesome fight scene than this too brief description might indicate -- the bulk of the fight should be this scene.)

INT. THRONE ROOM - LATER

Ty Lee and Mai are there, now in their regular outfits. Ty Lee is trying to get Bosco to do a circus trick.

TY LEE
Come on, it's easy. You just walk on your front paws instead of your rear ones. Like this...

Ty Lee demonstrates, walking on her hands. Suddenly, the ground beneath her hands literally seizes her hands, and we reveal Toph has entered.

TOPH
That is a nice trick.

Ty Lee struggles to get free, but can't. Sokka and Toph look like they are about to take on Mai, but Mai dismisses the idea altogether.

MAI
Just take the bear.

EARTH KING
Bosco!

Reunified with Bosco, they all leave.

INT. CRYSTAL COURTYARD - THAT MOMENT

The conclusion of the fight. At a climactic moment, Azula is up close to Katara, about to deliver a deadly lightning blast -- but Aang suddenly air blasts Azula back and out of the way.

But before Azula loses the charge, she realizes Katara is standing in the stream -- Azula releases the lightning into the stream, which travels through the water and SHOCKS Katara!

As Aang sees this happening, he is distracted for a moment and off guard as Zuko sweeps his feet, sending him flying back and to the ground. Aang, now on the ground, looks over at Katara who is also on the ground. Azula and Zuko loom above them. Things are looking very bleak.

Zuko sends a powerful blast at Aang, who scrambles out of the way. Aang sees Azula slowly approaching the fallen Katara. He sends an Earthbending wave across the ground to hit Azula -- but it suddenly stops, as a Dai Li agent enters, and sends the Earthbending wave back at Aang. Soon several more Dai Li agents are entering the courtyard -- Aang and Katara were already losing when it was just Azula and Zuko, so now the odds are beginning to look overwhelmingly bad.

AANG
There's too many...

He looks back at Katara, still in danger, but still scrambling to survive.

GURU (V.O.)
The only way is to let her go...

AANG
(to himself)
I'm sorry Katara...

Aang performs a rapid sequence of Earthbending moves, lifting crystals all around him to form a protective crystal shell. He closes his eyes to meditate like he did with the guru.

INT. AANG'S HEADSPACE - THAT MOMENT

Instantly, Aang is back where he left off with the Guru. This time (in the same visual as 2.19) He turns his back on Katara -- and crosses the bridge to the giant Avatar State version of himself. We cross cut this with...

INT. CRYSTAL COURTYARD - THAT MOMENT

Within his crystal cocoon, Aang's eyes and tattoos begin glowing. Zuko steps back, just as Aang explodes out of his cocoon, and begins rising up off the ground on a pedestal of pure energy. The many Dai Li agents are left in fear and awe. The heroic and epic Avatar theme music rises with Aang. He is embracing his destiny as a hero, since it will be the only way to save the day. As we watch his powerful form rise heroically...

BLAM!

He is suddenly shot from behind by a fierce and focussed bolt of blue lightning. We see Azula standing behind him, smiling.

INT. AANG'S HEADSPACE - THAT MOMENT

The Avatar State version of himself fades and vanishes, and the bridge crumbles beneath him, and he begins to fall...

INT. CRYSTAL CATACOMBS - THAT MOMENT

Mortally wounded, Aang begins coming out of the Avatar State and begins to fall... this is all in tragic slow motion. (Inspiration for this scene: the last scene in "The Professional" as Leon slowly falls to the ground.)

When he hits the ground, normal motion begins. Katara (Azula's attention now diverted to Aang) is able to get up and Waterbends herself up the stream to be by Aang's side.

He is completely unresponsive. She sits on the ground and cradles him in her arms as Azula and Zuko close in on them. Fear wells up in Katara's eyes as it seems completely hopeless. Then at the last moment, there's an explosion of lightning and fire between them, as Uncle Iroh bursts onto the scene!

Zuko stops. But Azula takes another step toward them -- Uncle BREATHES FIRE at her, causing Azula to dive away from his attack. He turns to Katara.

UNCLE
You've got to get out of here -- I'll hold them off as long as I can.

With Uncle providing cover, Katara escapes with Aang in her hands. Maybe she uses Waterbending to ride up the Waterfall.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Katara emerges from the tunnel carrying Aang, just as Appa arrives with Sokka, Toph, the Earth King and Bosco. They see Aang is unconscious.

EXT. SKY - MOMENTS LATER

Everyone watches tensely, like a family watching a surgeon do an operation on their loved one, as Katara tries to heal Aang.

She removes the spirit water vial from around her neck, and bends the water out. It SPARKLES (or has some other extra-special effect. Katara bends it around Aang, bends it around his wound. Finally, Aang comes to -- though again he is weak and groggy. In a shot stolen directly from episode 1.01, The first thing Aang sees as he opens his eyes is Katara. Then there is a lot of smiling and crying and hugging.

As Appa crosses over the outer wall of Ba Sing Se, the Earth King looks back.

He hangs his head. They fly off into the darkness.

INT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - LATER

Azula sits in the throne, and Zuko stands nearby, looking torn.

AZULA
We've done it, Zuko -- it's taken a hundred years, but the Fire Nation has conquered Ba Sing Se.

Zuko hangs his head.

ZUKO
I betrayed Uncle.

AZULA
No -- he betrayed you.
(beat)
Zuko, when you return home father will welcome you as a war hero.

ZUKO
But I don't have the Avatar. What if father doesn't restore my honor...

Azula gets up and approaches her brother, and actually seems affectionate towards him.

AZULA
He doesn't need to, Zuko. Today you restored your own honor.

This really hits home with Zuko -- he looks away and closes his eyes tight -- he doubts his choice. Off Zuko's pained expression...

END OF SHOW